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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA ON YUKOS AUCTION

REF: SECSTATE 268633

Classified By: Amb. Thomas B. Robertson Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Pol/econ chief delivered reftel points to Angelina Trajkovski of the MFA's Office for Eastern Europe on December 120. Trajkovski explained that no official reaction at the minister level had been developed, but that this was clearly a step backward for Russia and of concern to Slovenia. While Trajkovski is not aware of any Slovenes involved in the oil or gas industry in Russia, there are companies with production facilities (drug maker Krka for example) and joint ventures or considering expanding business in Russia.

ONLY A STUDENT OF RUSSIA

12. (C) Trajkovski spent seven years at Slovenia's mission in Moscow, 1993-2000, and said that she was both surprised and not surprised at recent developments in Moscow. She thought it was important to note that Putin is extremely popular across Russia and this popularity conveys legitimacy (in the eyes of the Russians) to his consolidation efforts. However, she did not think this popularity would translate into an extension of his tenure beyond what is constitutionally permitted, nor a Ukraine-style power play. Putin, she thought, would have more finesse. Despite her long tenure in Moscow and nearly four years covering Russia from Ljubljana, Trajkovski declined to be labeled an "expert" on Russia, saying wryly, "one can never become an expert, only an eternal student."

SLOVENIA'S DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIP

13. (C) When asked about GoS views on an EU statement about Yukos, Trajkovski was sure Slovenia would support one, but it would be important to work out a message acceptable to all. She fully appreciated the neuralgic reaction former Soviet bloc countries now in the EU have to issues related to Russia, but she also noted that Slovenia does not have any of this negative baggage in its own relationship with Russia. In fact, since first opening its mission in Moscow, relations have been generally positive. She was careful to add that this did not mean the GoS would be soft on Russia, only that at this time, there is little strain in this bilateral relationship. (Comment: As OSCE CiO, Slovenia will have to draw heavily on its banked good-will with Russia to make 2005 a successful year in office. End Comment.)

ROBERTSON

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